DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 345 PS 010 759

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TITLE Peers, Pathology, and Helping: Some Kids Are More Helpful Than Others.
PUB DATE Mar 79
NOTE 43p.; Portions of this paper were presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (San Francisco, California, March 15-18, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Altruism; Empathy; *Environmental Influences; Family (Sociological Unit); *Family Background; *Helping Relationship; *Individual Characteristics; Junior High Schools; Life Style; Middle Schools; Neurotic Children; Peer Acceptance; Peer Influence; *Prosocial Behavior; Research; Self Esteem; Social Factors; Socialization
IDENTIFIERS *Enculturation; Extroversion; Situational Demand Characteristics

ABSTRACT

Research suggests that a relatively stable, though small, percentage of children may be consistently conscientious helpers. What differentiates these children from others must become the focus of research in children's helping behavior. The available research on characteristics of helping children is relatively scarce. The purpose of this study of helping children was to examine individual characteristics, baseline rates of helping, and the interface of popularity and helping behavior for a sample of young adolescents. Subjects were 90 Caucasian eighth graders at a public middle school in central Virginia who were average or above-average achievers. Students completed sociometric rankings in which they rated each other as "most helpful," "least helpful," "most popular," and "least popular." In individual assessment, each subject was interviewed briefly about family composition, took several self-report personality measures, and was observed on six behavioral tasks. Among the findings, the most helpful children consistently demonstrated quantitatively more appropriate scorings on self-report inventories: higher self-concept, higher extroversion, lower neuroticism, and greater affiliative tendency. The helpers rated more popular were significantly more helpful in direct peer-related tasks. The helpers rated less popular were more cooperative, though unrecognized, behind the scenes. In future research, sensitivity to the type of helping situation and the interaction of helping situation and individual helper characteristics is advised. (Author/RH)

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Peers, Pathology, and Helping:

Some Kids Are More Helpful than Others

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Portions of this paper were presented at the Biennual Meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development, San Francisco, March 1979.

PS010759

Helping Behavior in Children:
An Interaction of Personal Characteristics and Situational Influences

For years, the study of helping behavior in children has focused upon situational influences and short-term training effects upon increasing children's sharing and "prosocial" behaviors (Bryan, 1975; Rushton, 1976). Inherent in such study are the basic assumptions that all children have some capacity for being "moral" or "altruistic," and that training influences can serve to increase such behavior for all children. While research has borne out the latter assumption, there is still some evidence for the common-sense notion that some children are more helpful than others.

Furthermore, it is quite conceivable that different children, depending on their personal characteristics and backgrounds, may respond to different types of helping situations with differing frequencies. As Bem and Allen (1974) have demonstrated with adults, cross-behavioral consistency is highly variable from individual to individual. Consequently, the examination of the interaction between personal characteristics and the particular situations in which individuals are behaving must be considered. Unfortunately, most research with regard to helping behavior in children has ignored the "person" side of the person-situation dichotomy. In other words, the typical investigation of helping behavior in children has focused upon the helping situation, and influences of models or training experiences upon increasing helping behavior for all children in a given sample (Hampson & Tavormina, 1979). Clearly, research must focus on differential responsivity of a variety of individuals to serveral types of

helping situations to more accurately assess the development of helping behavior.

What Is Helping Behavior?

Generally, studies on helping behavior have fallen under the rubrics of "altruism," "prosocial behavior," or "moral behavior" (Bryan, 1975; Rushton, 1976), measuring three distinct behavioral variables. In the first, rescue situations (e.g., Staub, 1970), the child is placed in an (experimentally-produced) emergency situation, in which another person, out of sight, apparently needs help. In the second, donation situations, the child gives or shares earned rewards with others, often after viewing a model donating rewards. In both of these situations, the subject typically has no face-to-face contact with the supposed recipient of the helping behavior.

In the third type of helping, involving face-to-face interaction with a peer or experimenter, the child offers assistance to another (e.g., Severy & Davis, 1971). Involved in this category are "psychological assistance," in which the child attempts to relieve a peer's emotional distress, and "task assistance," in which the child assists a peer in the completion of a difficult task.

All these helping behaviors have differential focal points, yet a certain common element runs across them: the child engages in some observable behavior towards another person, . . . "carried out to benefit another without anticipation of rewards from external sources" (Macauley & Berkowitz, 1970, p. 3). However, there is some evidence that the whole range of donation behaviors, which call for the transfer of tangible,

material goods, may not be related highly to rescue and assistance situations, which call for commitment of personal (intangible) time and effort. In fact, differences between behavioral performance of donation versus other forms of helping exist according to age and sex of the child; models also have different effects on donation vs. rescue (Weissbrod, 1974). Consequently, it is not surprising that studies like Yarrow and Waxler's (1976) find that measures of donation do not correlate highly with more person-centered helping, like assisting another child with a difficult task. Nevertheless, the donation measure is the one most typically employed in studies of helping behavior (Bryan, 1975).

Despite these situational differences, typical cross-situational correlations between the different types of helping behavior have clustered around +.30 (Rushton, 1976). Some commonality (albeit less than 10 percent of the variance) obviously runs across discrete helping behaviors. However, these studies were conducted across large samples of children, with no differentiation made between subjects as far as their charactistic differences (or baseline differences) in helping behavior. But, Rushton (1976) has suggested that there may be significant individual differences in the consistencies with which different children approach helping situations. This issue is reminiscent of Bem and Allen's (1974) demonstration that different people respond to various related situations with differential rates of consistency. In this study, college-age subjects rated themselves on how friendly (and conscientious) they were, and also how consistently friendly (conscientious) they were across situations. Not surprisingly, subjects who viewed themselves as highly consistent

demonstrated much higher inter-situational correlations (in unobtrusive measurement) than did their less-consistent counterparts. Interestingly, the average intercorrelations for the (self-rated) less consistent group approximated the +.30 level generally reached in studies of children's helping behavior. Following this analogy, it is likely that studies of children's helping behavior, which generally find inter-situational correlations of about +.30, utilize samples of undifferentiated, less-consistent subjects. It is also likely that a certain segment of such samples contains some highly-consistent helpers.

In fact, several studies have alluded to a rather small percentage of children who may exemplify such helpers. For example, Staub (1970) reported "distressing" results with sixth-graders: only 14 percent of his sample responded to distress calls from a peer in another room, whereas up to 48 percent of younger children responded. Staub (1971) later demonstrated that these older children were concerned about transgressing some experimenter-set "rule" about leaving the observation room, but no attempt was made to identify the small percentage of children who decided to respond to the rescue situation. The issue becomes: why did those 14 percent respond, and how were they different from the 86 percent who chose not to respond? In another study, examining the effects of various teaching modes upon subsequent helping behavior, Yarrow, Scott and Waxler (1973) found that 16 of 120 nursery-school children pretested for helping behavior (on verbal responses to pictures and various behavioral tasks) were regarded as "high" in helping, so were excluded from the study. However, the percentage of these "too helpful" children (13.3 percent) was

remarkably similar to Staub's 14 percent, which suggests that a relatively stable, albeit small, percentage of child helpers may exist in the larger population. What differentiates these children from the others must become the focus of research in children's helping behavior. Without such an emphasis on the person, in interaction with the situation, psychologists will be left with only a partial explanation of the development of helping behavior (Hampson & Tavormina, 1979).

Nevertheless, since most research dealing with helping behavior in children focuses upon situational influences, considerable data are available about the situations which facilitate general increases in helping behavior for samples of children. Since this material has been reviewed extensively elsewhere (Bryan, 1975; Rushton, 1976), only a brief review will be presented here.

Situational Influences on Helping Behavior

The vast majority of studies of children's helping behavior are performed in the laboratory, focusing upon heterogeneous samples of children (Rushton, 1976). Generally, the observation of helpful-others (models) serves as an impetus for donation and/or rescue in such settings. Children are more affected by the model's behavior if: a) the model is salient and powerful; b) the model is warm as opposed to angry or hostile; c) the model apparently derives joy from helping or donating; and d) the model behaves helpfully rather than preaches. These attributes appear critical in raising or teaching children to be helpful over extended socialization periods. Finally, the greater and longer-lasting the modeling or training presented to the child, the more generalized and longer lasting are the

results of training (Yarrow, Scott & Waxler, 1973). Since the Yarrow et al. study utilized half-day training in assistance and sharing by nursery school teachers over a several-week training period, this intervention most closely approximated long-term socialization effects of any study yet performed. In other words, the longer and more extensive the training, the more likely that the effects of such training will be incorporated into the child's larger "pool" of personal characteristics, increasing the probability of generalized responses in the future.

Characteristics of Helpful Children

Unfortunately, the available research with respect to characteristics of helpful children is relatively scarce; much of the data is derived from incidental findings and trends across studies of situational influences. Some of the major variables which should enter into the "characteristics" end of the dichotomy, as reviewed by Hampson and Tavormina (1979) are listed below:

1) Age: Generally, as age increases, egocentrism decreases, allowing the child to become "other-focused." Donation behavior increases over the age range of six to twelve (Rushton, 1976), while rescue behavior increases through about age nine, then falls off markedly by age twelve (Staub, 1970).

2) Personality variables:

a) The individual's emotional expressiveness has been linked to helping behavior (Aronfreed, 1968). Across several studies, those children who sought help for themselves were the most willing to assist others.

Closely related to such expressiveness is the individual's empathic tendency, or ability to recognize the need for assistance in others, which may also contribute to one's helping behavior. Indeed, Mehrabian (1972) has found that highly-empathic persons are more able to recognize nonverbal cues in others, as a precursor to a helping act.

b) The individual's affiliative tendency, or desiring interaction and affiliation with others, may represent a further motive for helping behavior.

3) Family enculturation: While socioeconomic status is not a major defining variable in children's helping behavior, a separate element of family style may contribute to helping behavior in children. Some families, by virtue of their teaching and interacting styles, may foster the development of helping behavior in their offspring. For example, Hoffman and Saltzstein (1972) compared parental teaching styles of children who were differentially rated by peers on their "considerateness of others," and found that significantly more mothers in the high "considerateness" group employed the moral teaching technique of "induction" (defined as verbal elaboration which stressed the consequences of the child's behavior on the actions or feelings of the other person). On the other hand, both "power assertion" and "love withdrawal" by mothers resulted in low or negative associations with children's rated "considerateness." Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King (1978) found a similar relationship for 1½ to 2½ year olds: emotionally-charged inductive verbalizations by mothers in mother-child interactions were related highly in other contexts to reparation behavior by the child when s/he was the cause of another's distress,

and altruistic approach behavior when the child was an innocent bystander. Also, as mentioned before, parental and paternal warmth have been cited as important qualities contributing to helping behavior (Rosenhan, 1969, Rutherford & Mussen, 1968).

Not only does observed interactive style of the family seem important, but an element related to occupational style may be related to helping behavior. For example, middle-class adolescents whose families were engaged in entrepreneurial enterprises were oriented toward reciprocity from peers if they chose to help, whereas those from families engaged in service-type occupations were more spontaneously helpful towards others in need (Berkowitz & Friedman, 1967). Obviously, some elements of familial behavioral and teaching style had some effects on helping behavior in offspring. Furthermore, these differences existed within traditional SES classes, emphasizing the role of familial style, rather than social class per se.

4) Peer group status: Finally, the relative status or role of the child in his/her peer group may serve as a shaper and definer of helping behavior among children. In general, peers evaluate helpful others with high regard (Bryan, 1975), so helping might have at its roots an attempt to win favor from peers. On the other hand, it may be that, for some children, popularity, or being highly regarded by others, is a necessary precursor to helping, or goes hand-in-hand with such behavior. If peer status is a highly-related variable to helping, then the interface of helping with being popular seems particularly important, yet no studies

have addressed directly the relationships between these realms. In addition, since self-esteem has been related to popularity and peer-group status (Hartup, 1970), the child's self-concept may be highly related to helping behavior.

Along these lines, Hampson and Tavormina (1979) posited the existence of several discrete helper "types" on the basis of their peer group status: popular helpers would be confident, self-assured, well-liked children who help because they want to; less popular helpers would be less confident and popular, and might engage in helping behavior as a way to gain social recognition and feel needed. It is highly probable that these two helper types (if they exist) would engage in different types of helping behavior with different frequencies. Consequently, not only are popularity and peer group status as they relate to helping behavior cogent areas for study, but the possibility that different types of child helpers might engage in different types of helping behavior, with different frequencies, is most important.

Across these studies and hypotheses, certain elements which require study appear: First, what are some salient characteristics of the most helpful children in a given sample? Second, does the interface of popularity, characteristics, and helping behavior give rise to discrete helper types? If so, how does the "person" side of the person-situation interaction moderate behavioral performance? Only when these questions are addressed can research begin to answer how helping behavior is fostered throughout childhood.

As a start, the present study attempted no intervention of any kind: the purpose was to examine characteristics, baseline rates of helping, and the interface of popularity and helping behavior for a sample of young adolescents.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 90 Caucasian eighth-graders at a public middle school in central Virginia; 38 males and 52 females comprised the sample (not significantly different from the composition of the 8th grade population at the school). Entire homeroom classes were included in the sociometric rankings (N=143). The final sample of 90 was derived from those subjects who returned parental permission slips for the study.

In an attempt to control for IQ effects, only those homerooms containing average and above-average achievers were used.

Procedure

Nine homeroom classes were visited by trained researchers on two consecutive days, where classes completed sociometric rankings. Students rated each other on "most helpful," "least helpful," "most popular," and "least popular" (and other buffer categories) within each homeroom. Each rater nominated classmates to first, second, and third place in each category.

All students received a letter explaining to parents that the school was interested in establishing a peer counseling/peer tutoring program (which they were, and subsequently did), and asking parental permission to

allow their children to be observed and interviewed during the preparatory phase. Permission slips were sent home three times to maximize returns.

In individual assessment after permission slips were returned, each subject was interviewed briefly about family composition, took several self-report personality measures, and was observed on six behavi ral tasks, separated by time and location.

The paper and pencil tests included:

1) The Eysenck Personality Inventory (Junior version; Eysenck, 1963), to measure emotional stability, introversion-extroversion, and tendency for social desirability in responding.

2) The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (Piers and Harris, 1967), to measure the individual's overall self-concept, as well as subscale scores of self-perceived popularity, intellectual and school status, attractiveness, and general happiness and satisfaction.

3) Measure of Affiliative and Empathic tendency (derived from Mehrabian, 1972), to assess the individual's desire for social contact and his/her tendency to perceive others' feelings and become affected by the feelings of others.

The behavioral situations included: 1) Rate of return of permission slips for the study (to assess cooperative behavior). These slips were sent home on three separate occasions, to maximize returns. Subjects returning them the first time received a rating of 5; second round, 3; and third round, 1. (Of course, subjects not returning the permission slips could not be included in the study).

2) Verbal responsiveness to audio-taped "peers" in distress about an emotional or family difficulty. Each subject responded to a taped male and female voice, counterbalanced in order for half the subjects. Scoring of responses was done according to Danish's (1976) verbal-facilitation skills manual.[1] A pair of trained researchers independently coded audio tapes of these interactions with inter-rater reliability of .86.

3) The degree of assistance (coded from 1 to 5) in picking up papers dropped by a female experimenter was assessed by two trained observors, with exact-rating reliability of .93.

4) Time commitment to meet with the taped "peer" whom the subject least preferred was assessed by asking the subject if he/she would be willing to meet with that person after school some day that week. Responses were coded in terms of time committed and enthusiasm of response.

5) Classroom ("public") volunteerism was assessed by homeroom teachers who asked students to indicate (in public) whether they would be interested in doing peer tutoring at the school. Degree of volunteerism was measured differentially in hours per week (during and/or after school) of volunteered interest.

6) Telephone (private) volunteerism was assessed by female researchers calling each subject by telephone (at home), asking each individual if he/she would be interested in becoming a Big Brother/Big Sister for a handicapped child younger than the subject. Responses were transcribed verbatim and rated by a pair of trained researchers (r=.87).

Results

Analysis 1: Behavioral Helping Scores

According to the summed scores on the six behavioral helping indices (each ranging from 1 to 5), subjects were divided into top-middle-bottom thirds as Table 1 indicates. In terms of descriptive personal characteristics and relative psychosocial adjustment of the subjects between

Insert Table 1 about here

groups, the results were highly consistent and quite definitive (Table 2): across the board, the most helpful children consistently demonstrated quantitatively more appropriate scorings on self-report inventories: higher self-concept ($p<.005$), higher extroversion ($p<.001$), lower neuroticism ($p<.05$), and greater affiliative tendency ($p<.05$). Across these measures, the least helpful subjects had significantly lower scores than did the middle or top groups. These findings suggest a direct association between the willingness or ability to engage in high levels of helping behavior and one's relative psychosocial well-being. In fact, significant correlations ranging from +.68 to +.25 were found when the composite helping score was paired with these personality measures.

Insert Table 2 about here

On the other hand, relatively few demographic indicators discriminated between behavioral-helping groups: sex-of-subject was not important

(Table 3), nor was subject birth order nor sociometric status. However,

Insert Table 3 about here

there was a trend ($p<.08$) for the most helpful children to have more highly-educated parents, especially mothers ($\bar{X}$ years education=13.04 years)

Insert Table 4 about here

when compared with the other two groups. Perhaps, as Hoffman and Saltzstein (1967) have suggested, more educated mothers socialize their children in ways using more verbal elaboration, which may reflect more internalized standards toward helping others.

Whatever the case, a definite statement can be made about the relative psychosocial superiority of the most helpful children in this sample, and the relative instability of the least helpful individuals.

Analysis 2: Sociometric status

Regardless of the clear-cut findings relating behavioral helping and personality self-report, the relationship between the behavioral data and the sociometric ratings by peers was less strong than hypothesized. Five discrete groups resulted from the sociometric analysis, derived on the basis of median-split scores on the "helpful," "popular," "unhelpful," and "unpopular" dimensions. Of the final sample of 90 (Table 5), six students were rated as "helpful and popular" ("HP"), 21 as "helpful" ("H"), 23 as

Insert Table 5 about here

"popular" ("P"), 17 as "unhelpful and unpopular" ("UN"; all subjects received above-median rankings on both dimensions), and 23 were largely unrecognized on either dimension, positively or negatively ("O").

When the behavioral data was examined through comparisons between the sociometrically-determined groups, some surprises were found: the sociometrically unrecognized group ("O") had the highest overall helping scores across the measures. This group scored the highest in picking up papers, volunteering by telephone, and returning permission slips for the study. The nominal Helpful and Helpful-Popular groups were closely equated,

Insert Table 6 about here

with highest scoring on the peer-verbalization task and time commitment to meet the taped peer after school. Popular-rated subjects were overall next lowest in behavioral helping, followed distantly by unhelpful-unpopular subjects. Obviously, sociometric choice was able to account for some of the variability in helping-behavior performance, but there was no direct one-to-one correspondence between sociometric ratings and observed helping behavior.

On the self-report personality indices, one consistent finding held across measures: the unhelpful-unpopular group fared consistently worse in terms of self-concept ($p<.02$), extroversion ($p<.03$), neuroticism (NS), and

affiliative and empathic tendencies ($p<.02$ and .04, respectively). Mean scorings of the other sociometrically determined groups found them significantly better-adjusted than the "Un" subjects. Consequently, sociometric ratings were able to differentiate well between levels of personal adjustment, but were less accurate as predictors of actual (behavioral) helping performance.

Perhaps sociometric scales were less accurate in tapping behavioral performance as a result of some moderator variable, such as "likability" or in-group peer status. In fact, when subjects checked general characteristics of persons on which they based their ratings, "popular" persons were characterized as outgoing, athletic, pretty, rich, handsome, and nice; "helpful" persons were seen as kind, considerate, friendly, happy, and nice. Obviously, children who did not fit the typical perception (but still might have been helpful in some ways) or were not in the "in-group," were not nominated to either a helping or a popular position.

However, socioeconomic and parental education levels (Table 7) were much more closely associated with sociometric choice. In this domain,

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Insert Table 7 about here

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unhelpful-unpopular children had significantly less-educated parents and came from larger families than did the more positively-rated groups. Obviously, peer-perceived in-group/out-group status is more directly related to social class and familial factors than is actual behavioral performance.

To examine the interaction of peer-group (sociometric) status and behavioral performance on helping tasks, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to assess the representation of the sociometrically-divided subjects in the Top-Middle-Bottom behavioral helping groups (Table 7). While each sociometric category had at least one representative in each of the Top-Middle-Bottom groups, primarily the unrated ("O") and secondarily the helpful ("H")-rated groups were favored in the Top 1/3, while the Unhelpful-Unpopular ("Un")-rated group was largely clustered in the Bottom 1/3. Obviously, sociometric ratings were fairly accurate in determining

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Insert Table 8 about here

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who was <u>not</u> behaviorally helpful, but much less accurate in nominating those who actually <u>were</u> helpful in the behaviors measured. Indeed, some individuals in the "Helpful," "Helpful-Popular," and "Popular" groups were behaviorally helpful, but a large proportion of other individuals were also behaviorally helpful. Consequently, perhaps at least two "types" or styles of helpers were present within this sample: helpful individuals who were recognized and esteemed by peers, and helpful individuals who were not viewed as positively when rated by peers.

To examine the cogency of the helper "type" notion, subjects whose composite behavioral helping scores were above the group median were divided into two categories. 1) Popular helpers (cf. Type A therapists) were designated as those who received above-median positive sociometric

ratings; 2) Less popular helpers (cf. Type B) received below-median positive sociometric ratings (largely the unrecognized helpers). As Table 9 indicates, virtually no differences between these helper-type groups were

Insert Table 9 about here

found in any of the personality measures, indicating that being helpful, regardless of type of helping or sociometric status, was associated with positive psychosocial adaptation.

However, where these individuals did differ was in the type of helping situation in which they performed. As Table 10 indicates, the more popular

Insert Table 10 about here

(rated) helpers were significantly more helpful in direct peer-related tasks: verbal responsiveness to peers in distress and willingness to spend extra time with these peers. The less popular (rated) helpers, on the other hand, were more cooperative "behind the scenes" helpers, engaging more readily in picking up papers for an adult, returning permission slips on time, and volunteering time to help with younger children. Consequently, it is not enough merely to say that some children are more helpful than others; one must be sensitive to the type of helping situation and how the characteristics of the situation interact with the characteristics of the individuals doing the helping.

Discussion

Several elements which appear as key to the shaping and performance of helping behavior have been isolated by this study. Obviously, different individuals engage in different types of helping behavior with differing frequencies, depending upon the demand characteristics of the situation and the interaction with individual characteristics. The vast majority of previous research on helping behavior in children has neglected this person-situation interaction, primarily as a result of limited scope of design and analysis.

The typical study of helping behavior in children is often a comparison of randomly divided heterogeneous samples of children, each receiving a different type of model (for example). Outcome is generally measured in terms of behavioral performance of subjects on a single helping situation (most frequently donation; Rushton, 1976), with mean increases between groups representing the critical analysis. Nevertheless, there may be significant individual differences in response to even a single situation that such mean increases would not detect.

For example, Hampson (1975) analyzed the effectiveness of his foster parent training program both through mean comparison scores with untrained controls, and through a Kendall's test which compared within-group rank orders on composite ability before and after training. As expected, mean increases across parent attitude scores, observed interaction with children, and knowledge of child behavior management favored the trained

group significantly when they were compared with controls (not unlike the typical child-helping study). But when the Kendall's test was performed on composite ability of the 17 parents within the training group across the pre-post training period, a perfect = 1.00 ($p<.001$) resulted. While all these parents improved their skills across training, the most skilled parents in the beginning were still at the top of the group after training. Likewise, the least skilled parents also learned, but remained the least skilled in comparison to their counterparts.

Obviously, different levels of ability and responsiveness to helping situations exist from individual to individual, presumedly as a result of different sets of characteristics in interaction with different demand characteristics of situations (Hampson & Tavormina, 1979). While research dealing with helping behavior in children has studied and isolated many situational influences which affect mean increases in such behavior (Bryan, 1975; Rushton, 1976), relatively little emphasis has been placed upon the person. Critical questions remain to be answered. What personal characteristics are moderators of helping behavior? What longitudinal influences affect high levels of helping behavior?

This study has suggested several elements which appear to be associated with levels and types of helping behavior. First, the implication exists that the family is a major determinant of helping behavior, as determined by previous research and the association between helping scores, peer group status, and parental education scores in this study. Prior studies have indicated that more educated mothers employ more elaborate verbal

teaching styles with their infants and children (Streissguth & Bee, 1972), and offer more positivity and individual attention to their offspring than do less educated mothers (Hess & Shipman, 1968). Perhaps at the core of helping behavior, and, indeed, all interpersonal behavior, is a measure of family acceptance. Obviously, future research must focus on salient family variables which affect the acquisition of helping behavior (Waxler, Yarrow, & King, 1978).

Second, a measure of peer acceptance is associated with the development and performance of helping behavior. Not only was status in the peer group associated with the type of helping behavior in which one engages, but negative peer status is associated with little, if any, helping activity. Consequently, future research can no longer ignore the pervasive and powerful effect the peer group plays upon helping behavior (or any behavior). Popular helpers in this study were more peer-oriented, while less popular helpers were more helpful in behind-the-scenes, non-peer-related ways. In this light, Bryan's (1975) assertion that some helpful children are viewed as "moralistic" and "intrusive" may be partially explained through this helper-type distinction. Since the peer group differentially reinforces behaviors depending upon one's social position, less popular helpers who attempt to be peer-helpers may indeed be viewed as "intrusive," whereas similar behavior from a popular helper might be received more favorably. This powerful reinforcing effect of the peer group cannot be ignored in future research in children's helping behavior.

In fact, Hartup (1977) views child pathology in terms of peer group status, and calls for interventions on the peer-group level to counter negative effects.

Finally, some element of self-acceptance seems to go hand-in-hand with helping behavior (regardless of peer-group status). In this study, the most helpful subjects, both popular and less popular, scored highest in self-esteem and in the healthy direction on personality measures, while least helpful (and most unpopular) subjects scored lowest on these measures.

All three, family, peer, and self-acceptance, seem to be intimately related and inseparable. The marked lack of any one would suggest an inability to help others, and, more globally, an impairment in psychosocial adaptation. Nevertheless, at the interface of peer group status and helping behavior, there appears to be a mediating effect (Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Popular helpers have both qualities in high levels, and appear psychosocially healthy. Less popular helpers have moderate (but non-negative) sociometric status, but are still psychosocially adaptive. Perhaps the ability to help others, even in non-peer related ways, can mediate against some of the potentially negative effects that are experienced by low-status non-helpers. As the unhelpful-unpopular group demonstrated in this study, the lack of popularity and helping ability was associated with poor psychosocial adaptation.

The very interface of peer-group status and helping behavior which variably affected psychosocial adaptation also served as a discriminator between types of helpers in this study. This finding cannot be overemphasized. First, different children (the "types" notion may be artificial and arbitrary, but shall stand to serve the purpose of demonstrating the argument) respond to different situations with different affinities. In this study, more popular helpers performed better in peer-related activities, while the less popular, less visible helpers were more prone to behind-the-scenes, non-peer helping. Consequently, the person-situation interaction typically addressed only by social psychologists (e.g., Funder & Bem, 1977) can no longer be ignored in the study of the development of children's helping behavior. The naivete of employing a single situation to measure "altruism" or helping behavior should be evident: isolated empirical situations become mere content foci which may or may not tap the overall process of helping.

Second, helping behavior, like all other behavior, is multiply determined. Unless researchers are able to generate studies which will include family, peer, personal, and situational determinants of helping behavior, the psychological world will remain more or less satisfied with situational influences and "mean increases in sharing."

This study has demonstrated that personal, peer group, and situational qualities all enter into the overall helping equation. But, does similar behavior and similar person-situation influence occur in adulthood? What influences can mediate helping behavior across age? Obviously, research in

this realm has many questions yet to answer. But once one accepts the complexity of the proposed model: a) some children are more helpful than others; b) different children engage in different forms of helping behavior; and c) helping behavior is multiply-determined, he is on the road to simplifying some of the large questions yet to be answered.

Postscript

Throughout the planning stages of this study, I was intrigued by the relatively stable but small percentage of particularly helpful children (around 15 percent) found in several studies addressed earlier. Several theories were forwarded: a) a constitutional-temperamental factor could account for about 15 percent of a given sample being particularly helpful; or b) perhaps social systems theory might dictate that 15 percent is a saturation point: i.e., a given social system can accommodate this set percentage of helpful individuals. In the present study, children designated as popular helpers ("type A") represented 16 percent of the sample: these were the popular, self-assured, peer-rated helpers. But an even larger percentage of less popular (behind-the-scenes) helpers was found who helped in different ways. Previous studies that have used only one or a few behavioral measures (especially rescue situations) that call for a degree of non-conformity and direct action perhaps are skewing the results toward finding primarily those popular helpers. The fact is that many more children are helpful in other ways, depending on the situation: less popular helpers are in fact quite helpful, but go largely unrecognized by their peers, and, until now, by the field of psychology.

Footnotes

[1]The scoring system for verbal facilitation, and all other behavioral scales, is available upon request from the author.

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Table 1

Classification of sample by Composite Helping Score

Group	N	M/F	Mean Comp H Score	Range (min=5 max=30)
Top (Most Helpful)	29	M=11 F=18	21.93	20-27
Mid	30	M=13 F=17	17.97	17-19
Bottom (Least)	31	M=14 F=17	13.71	10-16

Table 2

Personality Variables by Behavioral Helping Groups

Variable	F (2,87)	p	Scheffe[1]
Piers-Harris Self-Concept	5.64	<.005	Bot/Mid/Top
Eysenck Extroversion	8.55	<.001	Bot/Mid/Top
Eysenck Neuroticism[2]	3.33	<.05	Top/Mid/Bot
Mehrabian Affiliation	2.50	<.08	Bot/Mid/Top
Mehrabian Empathy	0.03	<NS>	Mid/Top/Bot

[1]Scheffe tests: indicate means scores from lowest to highest in left to right direction; "/" denotes significantly different subset ($p \leq .05$).

2Low scores appropriate; on all others, high scores appropriate.

Table 3

Sex-of-Subject Differences Across Behavioral and Personality Measures

Measure	F(1,88)	p<	Scheffe[1]
Composite Behavioral	.98	NS	M-F
Piers-Harris Self-Concept	.99	NS	M-F
Eysenck Extroversion	.76	NS	M-F
Eysenck Neuroticism[2]	3.25	.07	M-F
Eysenck Lie[2]	.95	NS	M-F
Mehrabian Affiliation	.01	NS	M-F
Mehrabian Empathy	10.48	.01	M/F

Table 4

Family demographic variables by Behavioral Helping Groups

Helping Group	Family Variables				
	Father absent?	Mother Work?	Oldest Child?	$\bar{X}$ years education Mother	$\bar{X}$ years education Father
Top 1/3 (N=29)	7	24	12	13.04	13.04
Mid 1/3 (N=30)	5	18	11	11.89	12.87
Bot 1/3 (N=3)	5	18	10	11.57	12.26
Statistical Analysis	χ^2=0.97 (NS)	χ^2=1.22 (NS)	χ^2=0.54 (NS)	F(2,80)=2.35*	F(2,80)=0.47 (NS)

*$p \leq .10$

Table 5

Distribution of Subjects as Nominated by Sociometric Scales

Group	Description	N	(male/female)	Helpful Score			Popular Score		
				$\bar{X}H(+)$	$\bar{X}UH(-)$	Σ	$\bar{X}P(+)$	$\bar{X}UP(-)$	Σ
HP	Helpful and Popular	6	(2/4)	21.00	2.00	+19.00[c]	19.00	1.83	+17.17[c]
H	Helpful	21	(5/16)	13.81	2.86	+10.95[a]	3.33	1.24	+2.09
P	Popular	23	(10/13)	11.91	10.61	+1.30	19.22	0.91	+18.31[c]
"UH"	UnHelpful and Unpopular	17	(10/7)	3.06	11.91	-8.85[b]	4.83	22.78	-17.95[d]
"0"	Unrated	23	(11/12)	4.96	3.00	+1.96	3.52	1.30	+2.22

[a]Median Helpful = 9.00

[b]Median Unhelpful = 6.58

[c]Median Popular = 7.08

[d]Median Unpopular = 5.38

Table 6

A) Performance on Behavioral Helping Tasks by Sociometric Groups

Task	F(4,84)	p	Scheffe[1]
Permission slips	7.12	<.001	Un-P/P-H/HP-O
Pick up Papers	2.95	<.025	Un/HP-P/H-O
Verbalization to Tape	3.63	<.01	O-P/HP-H/Un
Time Commitment	1.36	<NS>	O-Un-H-P-O
Volunteer - Classroom	1.27	<NS>	Un-H-HP-P-O
Volunteer - Telephone	1.79	<NS>	Un-H/HP-P/O

B) Self report personality differences between sociometric groups

Personality measures			
Piers-Harris Self-Concept	3.25	<.02	Un/H-HP/O-P
Eysenck Extroversion	2.79	<.03	Un/H-HP/O-P
Eysench Neuroticism[2]	0.13	<NS>	H-O-Un-P-HP[2]
Mehrabian Affiliation	3.03	<.02	Un/P=O-H-HP[3]
Mehragian Empathy	2.63	<.04	Un-P/O-H-HP

[1]Group means reported from low to high in left-to-right direction; "1" indicates significantly different subsets by Scheffe procedure ($p \leq .05$).

[2]Low scores appropriate; all others, high scores appropriate.

[3]"=" designates equal group means.

Table 7

Demographic family indicators between sociometrically-determined groups

Group (N)	Father Absent?	Mother Work?	$\bar{X}$ yrs. education Mother	$\bar{X}$ yrs. education Father
HP (6)	1	5	15.67	15.33
H (21)	3	12	11.95	12.74
P (23)	5	15	12.26	12.64
Un (17)	1	9	10.47	11.00
O (23)	6	19	12.44	12.65
	$\chi^2_{(4)}=3.16$ (NS)	$\chi^2_{(4)}=5.28$ (NS)	$F(4.79)=4.32$ $p\leq.01$	$F(4.78)=3.07$ $p\leq.025$

Table 8

Representation of sociometrically-determined groups in Top-Middle-Bottom Behavioral Groups

Rated Group	Behavioral Group			Total
	Top 1/3	Middle 1/3	Bottom 1/3	
1 (H&P)	1	4	1	6
2 (H)	7	5	9	21
3 (P)	6	10	7	23
4 ("Un")	2	3	12*	17
5 ("O")	13*	8	2	23
TOTAL	29	30	31	90

$\chi^2_{(8)} = 143.63$, $p < .001$

Table 9

Personality comparisons between Popular (Type A) and less popular Helpers

Personality measure	F(1,31)	p	Scheffe[1]
Piers-Harris Self Concept	0.11	NS	A-B
Eysenck Extroversion	0.25	NS	B-A
Eysenck Neuroticism[2]	0.32	NS	A-B[2]
Eysenck Lie[2]	0.11	NS	A-B[2]
Mehrabian Affiliation	0.16	NS	B-A
Mehrabian Empathy	0.22	NS	B-A

[1]Group means - reported from low to high in left-to-right direction.

[2]Low scores appropriate; all others, high scores appropriate

Note:

A = Popular helpers (high sociometric status + top 1/2 composite behavioral) N = 14.

B = Less popular helpers (low sociometric status + top 1/2 composite behavioral) N = 19.

Table 10

Performance of Popular (A) vs. Less Popular (B) Helpers on Behavioral Tasks

Behavioral measure	F(1,31)	p	Scheffe[1]
Pick up papers	3.61	.06	A-B
Volunteers class	0.64	<NS>	A-B
Volunteers phone	3.68	.06	A-B
Permission slips	3.17	.07	A-B
Verbal responsiveness	9.48	.005	B/A
Time commitment	8.32	.007	B/A

[1]Group mean scores depicted low to high in left-to-right direction; "/" indicates significantly different subsets by Scheffe procedure ($p < .05$).

Figure 1

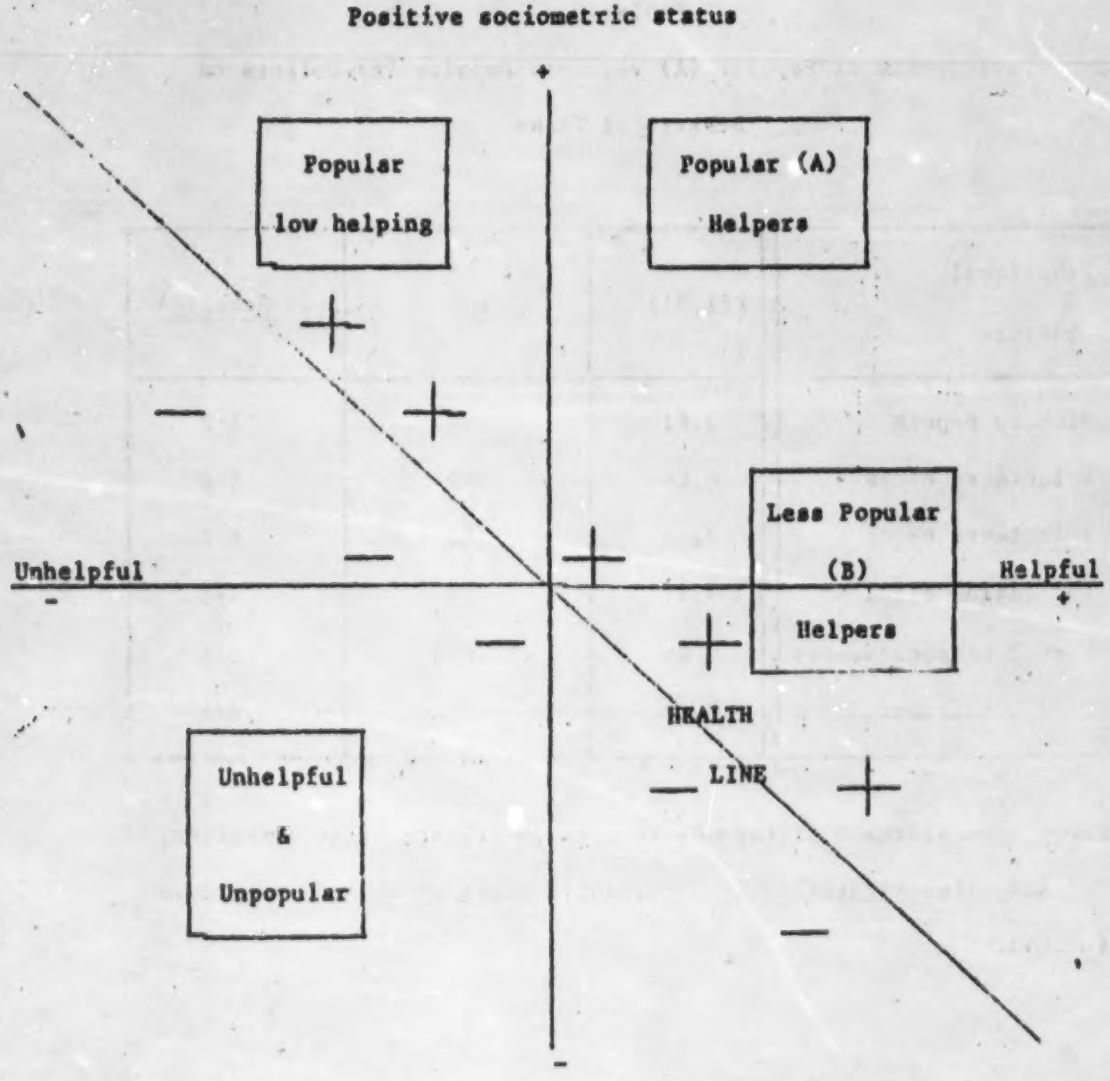

Figure Caption

1. Representation of the sample along the psychosocial "Health Line"